

actually foreseen by experts all across the political spectrum.

Economists said this inflation is exactly—exactly—what would happen if Democrats pushed ahead with their reckless spending sprees that the economy simply did not need.

Larry Summers, who was Treasury Secretary for President Clinton and ran the National Economic Council for President Obama, warned Democrats a year ago this week that Democrats far-left plans could trigger “inflationary pressures of a kind we have not seen in a generation.”

Jason Furman, who chaired President Obama’s Council of Economic Advisers, said the very same thing. He said the Democrat’s spending binge was “definitely too big for the moment. I don’t know any economist that was recommending something the size of what was done.” That is Jason Furman, President Obama’s Council of Economic Advisers.

But our Democratic colleagues did not let families’ actual needs restrain their radical daydreaming. They had already made up their minds. This temporary pandemic was to serve as a Trojan horse for permanent socialism.

Remember, right from the start, in March of 2020, with Americans dying from this new, mysterious virus, a top House Democrat called it “a tremendous opportunity to restructure things to fit our vision.”

So the new Democratic Party government’s first major act was to start printing, borrowing, and spending money like there was no tomorrow. They managed to blow through roughly \$2 trillion on a so-called COVID bill that utterly failed to crush the virus. Less than 9 percent of the money went to the healthcare fight at all. Even the liberal expert, Steve Rattner, a former Obama official, said the spending spree was Democrats’ “original sin” when it comes to inflation.

And working Americans are paying dearly for it every single day. Just look at the headlines:

2021 went down as the worst year for inflation since 1982.

Higher prices seeped into just about every thing households and businesses buy.

There’s no telling when prices will fall to more sustainable levels.

Further quotes:

[R]ising costs for food . . . rent and other necessities are heightening the financial pressures on America’s households.

Rising prices have wiped out the healthy pay increases that many Americans have been receiving, making it harder for households, especially lower-income families, to afford basic expenses.

Yes, it is true that inflation is up all around the world. This is partially a global phenomenon. But the United States has it worse—worse—than almost everyone else.

Data from Pew show that America’s inflationary spike has been the third worst among all countries they measure. We have it worse than any other country in the G12—much worse inflation than the UK or France or Aus-

tralia or Japan. That is what this agenda has bought us.

And Americans are afraid this may still just be the beginning. Seventy-nine percent of Americans now expect inflation will get even worse over the next 6 months. Now the Democratic-caused inflation has the Federal Reserve signaling they may need to raise interest rates higher and faster than they had expected.

This brings its own set of risks upon the American people, and, again, it is exactly—exactly—what experts predicted.

A full year ago this week, the economist, Michael Strain, testified that Democrats’ spending could corner the Fed and force them to clamp down on the recovery sooner than necessary. Democrats had mainstream economic experts warning against their reckless spending plans and still decided to drive right over the cliff.

Working families are paying the price every day—at the checkout counter, at the gas pump, at the used car lot, when they pay their bills, when they look for housing. And now Washington Democrats are trying again to revive talk of yet another—another—reckless bout of spending this year.

American families are already hurting enough. They need that bad idea to stay buried.

BURMA

Mr. President, on an entirely different matter, today marks 1 year since the people of Burma yet again had their future hijacked by a military coup. Since this time last year, the Tatmadaw—which is what they call the Burmese military—has tried to achieve, through open repression and violence, what it long sought to achieve from the shadows. They want to derail Burma’s democracy.

The ruling generals now have the blood of thousands of protesters and innocent civilians on their hands. Thousands more are languishing in prison on political charges.

Those detained include my friend Aung San Suu Kyi. They have also included a number of foreigners like the American journalists Nathan Maung and Danny Fenster. The Australian economist Sean Turnell remains unjustly imprisoned for now. Even one political prisoner would be one too many.

The Tatmadaw’s violence in the streets and its desecration of justice in sham courts have been a sad step backward for Burma. Unfortunately, it is a step that many of us who pay close attention to this country have feared.

But 1 year ago—1 year on—it is encouraging to see the people of Burma rejecting one of the oppressors’ favorite cynical tactics, and that cynical tactic is to try to stoke resentment and violence between diverse ethnic groups.

Well, Burma’s ethnic groups are no longer buying that. They see the common enemy that denies them their freedom. Millions of people across

Burma are rallying together behind the representative National Unity Government.

They are swelling the ranks of the National Unity Consultative Council in what can rightly be described as a revolution. But their bravery and unity may yield little without greater international assistance.

A year ago, I called on the Biden administration to impose costs on those who stand in the way of the people of Burma and urged our partners to do the same. Along with many in the Burmese diaspora communities that call Kentucky home, I was encouraged by President Biden’s quick condemnation of the coup, the sanctions against two of the junta’s main funding sources, and efforts to target individual coup leaders.

But, regrettably, these well-intentioned efforts have not been enough. There is more the Biden administration must do, and there is more that must be done by our democratic partners out in the region. The administration should be prioritizing Burma in its diplomacy throughout Asia, especially India.

Along with our partners, the United States should expand sanctions to further isolate the military and security forces. We should move to expose countries like Russia and China that aid and abet the repression of the people of Burma.

We must push back on Cambodia, which chairs the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, and indicates they may welcome—actually welcome—the illegitimate regime to international summits.

The United States and our partners should also provide more direct help to the representative institutions that are trying to protect the people of that country. This should include direct, cross-border, humanitarian assistance that bypasses the Tatmadaw, institutional support, and capacity building for the NUG and the NUCC.

Look, the international stakes go beyond Burma itself. The Tatmadaw aren’t the only ones who benefit from chaos and injustice reigning in Burma.

The Chinese Communist Party loathes—literally loathes—the idea of a functioning democracy in its own backyard. They have been working for years to keep Burma weak and subservient to Beijing. And Russia has found a happy customer in the Tatmadaw for surplus arms.

So, 1 year on, the people of Burma are paying close attention. From prison, from exile, from the streets of its cities, they are watching to see which friends of democracy have their backs. They are watching which champions of human rights remember the political prisoners whom the junta has jailed and the innocent men, women, and children it has murdered.

I have been proud to support the people of Burma on their long journey toward self-government. I have been proud to help ensure their struggles are not forgotten.

America and our partners need to pass this crucial test. We must leave no room for doubt about our commitment to democracy in Burma.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

BIDEN ADMINISTRATION

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, we recently passed the 1-year anniversary of President Biden's inauguration. It is a natural time for taking stock of the first year of his Presidency.

In President Biden, we were supposed to get a leader—a leader at home and on the world stage. The grownups, we were told, were back in the room. But the truth of the matter is that President Biden's first year in office has been marked by a lack of leadership more than anything else.

Again and again, President Biden has simply abdicated his responsibilities. Take perhaps the two defining domestic crises of the Biden Presidency: our inflation crisis and our border crisis. In both cases, the response of the President and his administration has by and large been to stick their fingers in their ears and pretend the crises don't exist. Sure, the President or his people make a gesture toward the problem every now and then, but mostly, you would be forgiven for thinking that neither the border crisis nor the inflation crisis was even on the President's radar.

Migrants continue to pour across our southern border in massive numbers, creating a humanitarian, enforcement, and security nightmare. And the President? Well, he appears to believe that if he ignores the problem long enough, it will go away. When he does talk about immigration, it amounts to a green light to the cartels and traffickers to keep leading migrants to our borders. That is why I recently joined more than 100 lawmakers in requesting that the Department of Homeland Security's inspector general investigate the Biden administration's border failures.

Between the President's rhetoric and his failure to take any meaningful action to address the influx of illegal immigration, it is no surprise that we saw more than half a million attempts to cross our southern border illegally in the current fiscal year's first 3 months alone—half a million.

Meanwhile, American families are struggling with the worst inflation in 40 years—40 years. The last time inflation was this bad, “E.T.” was just premiering, and “Return of the Jedi” hadn't even come out yet. American families are struggling with huge increases in the price of the most basic necessities, from food to fuel. And the administration's response? Mostly crickets.

Of course, President Biden hasn't just been largely ignoring this crisis; he actually helped create it. The so-called American Rescue Plan Act the Democrats passed and the President signed into law in March of last year helped produce the sky-high inflation we are experiencing. But instead of addressing the resulting crisis, the President has been focused on passing another massive government spending bill that would almost undoubtedly worsen our inflation problem. Yes, his solution to our inflation crisis is to double down on the strategy that helped produce so much inflation in the first place.

Meanwhile, Americans are wondering if their paychecks will stretch to afford the sharp increases at the grocery store and in gas prices, utility bills, household commodities, and the list goes on.

On the world stage, of course, the defining moment of President Biden's first year was his disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan. The President's arbitrary, chaotic withdrawal was a real low point for our country. Thirteen of our military men and women died in a terrorist attack during the evacuation from Kabul. We abandoned thousands of individuals who had worked with us in Afghanistan and whom we had promised to protect and left behind hundreds of American citizens. The President, who was supposed to restore our standing on the world stage, left our allies wondering if our word could be relied on, not to mention the fact that the disastrous withdrawal left our country in a more precarious national security position.

Meanwhile, the President's recent press conference left serious questions as to how well he is likely to handle another pressing national security, and that is the issue in Ukraine. Casually dismissing a possible “minor incursion” into Ukraine's sovereign territory did not inspire confidence in the President's ability to stand up to Russia.

We can't afford missteps and walk backs. Putin is looking to test America and NATO's resolve, looking for any hesitation or division. I hope the President and the majority party will take seriously the threat to Ukraine, utilize any remaining levers of American influence to deter a renewed attack, and, if Putin proceeds, make him immediately realize it was a miscalculation.

Perhaps the biggest thing the President was going to do—the most important way he was going to be a leader—was to pull our country together. That was the defining theme of President Biden's inaugural address.

I quote:

Today, on this January day, my whole soul is in this: Bringing America together. Uniting our people. And uniting our nation.

Contrast that speech with the speech that book-ended the other end of his first year, his speech in Georgia on election legislation. We went from a President who wanted to unite our Na-

tion to a President who refers to his political opponents as enemies.

“We can see each other not as adversaries but as neighbors,” the President said in his inaugural address. “We can treat each other with dignity and respect.” In his Georgia speech, by contrast, the President's political opponents became not only adversaries but enemies and racists, all for the crime of disagreeing with the President's vision of election reform.

The President's complete condemnation of half the country was striking. I lost track of the number of people he implied were racist. The President assumed bad faith on the part of those who disagree with him. Missing from his speech was any shred of recognition that perhaps Americans of good will can disagree on election legislation. No, if you disagree with the President, you are a racist. Like Hillary Clinton before him, it is clear that President Biden conceives of a large portion of the American people as deplorable. The President repeatedly referred to justice in his Georgia speech. Perhaps he should consider the profound injustice of baselessly suggesting half the country is racist.

In his inaugural address, the President said, “We must reject a culture in which facts themselves are manipulated and even manufactured.” I have been profoundly disappointed to see the President and many of my Democrat colleagues manipulate the facts about State election bills to support their desire for a Federal takeover of elections.

Manipulated facts were a hallmark of the President's speech in Georgia, as he tried to twist a mainstream election law into Jim Crow 2.0. His attempts were particularly ironic given that the State he was complaining about offers greater opportunities to vote than are offered by the President's home State of Delaware.

Days later, at a press conference marking his first year in office, the President laid the groundwork for future division and disunity by suggesting that the 2022 elections could be illegitimate if Democrats' election legislation doesn't get passed; that is, I assume, if Democrats don't win. It was yet another profoundly disappointing remark from a President who was supposed to take the lead in bringing this country together.

One year into the Biden Presidency, it has become clear that the President of the inaugural address—the President whose whole soul was committed to uniting our Nation—has long ago disappeared. The President has not only failed to unite the country, but, as his ugly and divisive speech in Georgia made clear, he has come to regard anyone who opposes his policies with active hostility and contempt.

Just 1 year—1 year—after dedicating himself to uniting our country, the President is dividing Americans into supporters and enemies. “We must end this uncivil war that pits red against blue, rural versus urban, conservative